Indian Ocean Islands

Comoros & Mayotte



Mayotte Scope Owl by Daniel Danckwerts

Our Comoros Tours takes in the 4 volcanic islands of the Comoros archipelago situated off the central-east African coast. They are divided between the Union of the Comoros, a sovereign nation formed by the three islands of Grande Comore, Anjouan, Mohéli and the French overseas department of Mayotte. The vast evergreen forests that once dominated these islands have largely been removed leaving a few remaining pockets of pristine habitat boasting in the region of 24 endemic species (and likely to reach a staggering 40 with further research). The addition of incredible scenery, a series of easily approachable active volcanoes and particularly friendly locals have made these islands an enticing and rewarding experience. We welcome you to join us as we island-hop with binoculars in hand in our quest to find the birds of these heavenly Indian Ocean isles.

Itinerary & Map

Day 1	**Arrival in Moroni, Grande Comore (Njazidja)**
Day 2	**Mount Karthala**
Day 3	**Mount Karthala & Salimani**
Day 4	**Flight from Moroni to Mohéli (Mwali)**
Day 5	**Miringoni**
Day 6	**Mohéli; flight to Anjouan (Nzwani)**
Day 7	**Baramtsanga & Moya**
Day 8	**Anjouan; flight to Mayotte via Moroni, transfer to Grande-Terre; Pic Combani**
Day 9	**Pic Combani, Grande-Terre to Petite-Terre & final departure**



Birding sites in detail



Karthala Scops Owl by Daniel Danckwerts

Grande Comore - Iconi and Marabou Lake. Our bird list is likely to start ticking over immediately, with Pied Crow and possibly even Madagascan Spinetail overhead. Iconi and Marabou Lake are a series of freshwater wetlands where we will find several waterfowl, targeting the near endemic Malagasy Kingfisher, Malagasy Pond, Striated, Squacco and Black-crowned Night Herons, possibly a vagrant Humblot's Heron or Dimorphic Egret, Great Egret, Little Grebe and a chance for the odd Great or Lesser Frigatebird amongst others.

Grande Comore - Mount Karthala. We'll spend a day exploring the fabled Mount Karthala. Setting off early from our hotel, we will ascend the mountain on a new road, before setting out on a one-hour hike to reach suitable habitat for the endemic Karthala White-eye.

We may make opportunistic stops en route for Malagasy Paradise Flycatcher (ssp *comorensis*), Malagasy Black Swift, Malagasy Palm Swift, Malagasy Green Sunbird (ssp *moebii*), Grande Comore Bulbul, Comoro Fody (ssp *cosobrina*), Greater Vasa and Comoro Black Parrots, Kirk's White-eye, Comoro Blue Pigeon, Frances's Sparrowhawk (ssp *griveaudi*), Cuckoo-roller (ssp *gracilis*), Comoro Cuckooshrike (ssp *cucullata*) and Humblot's Sunbird (ssp *humbloti*).

As we reach primary forest our target species include Humblot's Flycatcher, Grande Comore Brush Warbler and Comoro Thrush (ssp *comorensis*). As we ascend higher up Mount Karthala, we will pass through a diverse range of habitats from moss-lined forest paths to broken heath where we are sure to find the common, endemic subspecies of African Stonechat (ssp *voeltzkowi*). The highest reaches of the mountain support one of our primary targets, the endemic Karthala White-eye. We will remain on the mountain till darkness falls, giving ourselves the best chance of finding the near mythical, Critically Endangered Karthala Scops Owl. After what we hope is a successful owling session, we will return to Moroni for the remainder of the night.



Mayotte Drongo by Daniel Danckwerts

Grande Comore - Salimani. We shall make our way to this known Grande Comore Drongo stakeout. Surprisingly, this is one of the trickiest endemics on the island and we shall hope to have a little luck on our side. While searching for the drongo, we also have

good chances of seeing Comoro Olive Pigeon and further sightings of Humblot's Sunbird and Comoro Fody.



Humblot's Sunbird by Daniel Danckwerts

Mohéli - Miringoni. Our birding will be largely dependent on the time of our arrival, but we will certainly visit Miringoni, searching for the endemic Comoro Green Pigeon, Comoro Blue Vanga, Mohéli Bulbul, Mohéli Brush Warbler (Benson's Brush Warbler), Mohéli White-eye and the local form of Comoros Thrush (ssp *moheliensis*). We shall also search for the variant subspecies of Malagasy Brush Warbler, which is rather confusingly referred to as 'Mohéli Brush Warbler' by some authorities. The local forms of Malagasy Green Sunbird (ssp *voeltzkowi*) and Humblot's Sunbird (ssp *mohelicus*) may also merit species status in the future.

With the aid of some local knowledge, we should be able to find the highly sought-after, endemic Mohéli Scops Owl, which was only discovered in 1998. While exploring the area we may also encounter an inquisitive Mongoose Lemur or two.

Anjouan - Lac Dzianlandzé. Of the Comoros archipelago, Anjouan has suffered the most from deforestation, with only the steepest mountain slopes having any intact primary forest cover. As a result, one of our primary target species for the island, the Critically Endangered Anjouan Scops Owl is rather challenging to find. We will thus dedicate a fair amount of our time, especially in the evenings and early mornings to finding this small predator. We'll head out in the late afternoon to Lac Dzianlandzé for our first foray into the forest for Anjouan Scops Owl. Other species we expect to find around Lac Dzianlandzé include Anjouan White-eye, Anjouan Brush Warbler, Comoros Thrush (ssp *bewsheri*) and Malagasy Harrier.

Anjouan - Moya. The forest above Moya is another area to look for Anjouan Scops Owl. Other species we may find here include the long streamer-tailed Malagasy Paradise Flycatcher (Pale Paradise Flycatcher, ssp *vulpina*), Crested Drongo (ssp *potior*), Comoro Fody (ssp *anjuanensis*), Frances's Sparrowhawk (ssp *pusillus*), Cuckoo-roller (ssp *intermedius*), Anjouan Sunbird and, if we are lucky, Malagasy Kestrel.



Anjouan Sunbird by Daniel Danckwerts

Mayotte - Pic Combani. Despite being Comorian in most aspects, Mayotte is a department of France, and the infrastructure is markedly superior to



Comoro Blue Vanga by Daniel Danckwerts

what we will have experienced to date. On arrival in Petite-Terre, the small island hosting the international airport, we shall take a ferry transfer to the 'mainland', or Grande-Terre. The ferry ride can produce some interesting species, with White-tailed Tropicbird being of particular interest. We shall then drive up to our rural accommodation, which is surrounded by rainforest and home to all the endemics we will be searching for – right on our doorstep!

Our lodge grounds may produce Frances's Sparrowhawk (ssp *brutus*), the striking Mayotte Drongo, beautiful Mayotte Sunbird, and the gregarious Mayotte White-eye. We have a good chance of finding Mayotte Scops Owl on a day roost; alternatively, we shall search for them later in the evening when they become more active.

While specifically targeting the endemics, we shall also be looking for any of the island-specific subspecies which may include Malagasy Paradise Flycatcher (ssp *pretiosa*), while we should also have great photographic opportunities for Comoros Blue and Olive Pigeons, Malagasy Bulbul, and Olive Bee-eater.

Mayotte – Pointe Mahabo. Time permitting, we'll spend some time at Pointe Mahabo searching for Comoros Fody (ssp *algondae*), while also investigating the mudflats in the region for Crab-plover and a handful of Palearctic waders and larids such as Caspian, Greater Crested, Lesser Crested and Bridled Terns, Grey, Common Ringed and Greater Sand Plovers, Bar-tailed Godwit, Eurasian Whimbrel, Common Greenshank, Terek, Curlew and Commons Sandpipers, Sanderling, and Ruddy Turnstone.



Malagasy Harrier by Daniel Danckwerts

Tour Grading & Key

Overall Ease		Moderate. Some difficult hikes, logistical changes.
Birding Ease		Moderate. Some tricky species require persistence. Nocturnal birding may be required on multiple days.
Accommodation		Comfortable to basic.
Walking / Trails		Mostly easy, but there will be several moderate to hard hikes.
Vehicles / Roads		Roads are variable in quality, but limited amount of driving.
Photography		Good. No dedicated hides.
Annoyances		Can be very humid.

Financial Arrangements and Important Notes

Tour dates, prices, single supplement, approximate flight costs and tour spaces are displayed on our website.

Tour inclusions:

- All meals from dinner on day 1 to lunch on day 9;
- Bottled drinking water;
- All lodgings;
- All ground & ferry transportation during the tour;
- All reserve entrance fees;
- All guiding services
- Tips for local guides, drivers and services.

Tour exclusions:

- Visa fees;
- ANY flights;
- Any beverages (including mini-bar charges at hotels);
- Optional excursions;
- Special gratuities;
- Telephone calls, laundry and other items of a personal nature.

Single Supplement: The single supplement cost for this tour will be charged if you wish to have single accommodation. If RBL cannot provide you with a rooming partner for these nights although you choose to share, the single supplement will become applicable. We will make all reasonable efforts to ensure that a rooming partner is found if you do wish to share.

Tipping: As noted above, gratuities (drivers, hotel staff, restaurants etc.) are included on this tour. However, this does NOT include your Rockjumper leader/s. If you feel that they have given you excellent service, it is entirely appropriate to tip them at your discretion.

- **Due to constantly fluctuating exchange rates, we quote our tours in 4 currencies. The tour price is fixed only in the currency printed in bold, and the actual cost in the other currencies listed will be adjusted according to prevailing exchange rates at the time of final invoicing. The same applies to approximate flight and single supplement rates.**
- **Rates are based upon group tariffs; if the tour does not have sufficient registrations, a small group supplement will be offered to confirm the tour.**
- **Tour prices are subject to unforeseen increases in tour related costs and may have to be adjusted as a result.**
- **The designated tour leader/s may be changed at short due to unforeseen circumstances.**
- **The itinerary is indicative only. Changes may need to be made to the order in which the tour is conducted, or some of the venues we visit closer to departure. We will attempt to adhere as close to the original program as possible.**

- It is important for the comfort of your fellow travellers that you do not over-pack. Kindly stick to 20kg for check-in luggage and 8kg for hand luggage.
- **The island of Mayotte is an overseas Department of France (Département de Mayotte). It is necessary to obtain visas for both the Union of Comoros and France (Schengen).**
- Fitness: This Indian Ocean Islands – Comoros tour requires a good level of fitness, and participants should be in good health to consider this tour. Most of the birding will be done on foot.
- Accommodation is mostly of an average standard. On Moheli the hotel is fairly basic.
- There is now a good road up most of Mount Karthala, but we still need to hike for an hour or so to reach the habitat of the Karthala White-eye.

Arrival and Departure Details

The tour departs from Prince Said Ibrahim International Airport, Moroni (IATA: HAH) on day 1. While you are free to arrive at any time on this day, should you wish to join the planned afternoon birding, do arrive in the early morning or preferably a day in advance. The tour will conclude after lunch on day 9 with a transfer to Dzaoudzi–Pamandzi International Airport, Mayotte (IATA: DZA).

The above information in respect of arrivals and departures is a guide only. Precise arrival and departure information will be sent to you in your Tour Confirmation package once the tour has been officially confirmed. If you wish to arrive early and/or depart late and would like assistance in this regard, kindly contact the Rockjumper office.

Prince Said Ibrahim International Airport, Moroni (IATA: HAH), on the island of Grande Comore is the main port of entry for international flights for the start of this tour. Dzaoudzi–Pamandzi International Airport (IATA: DZA), on the island of Mayotte, is the main port of exit for international flights departing this tour.

Visa requirements differ by country, nationality of the traveller and duration and purpose of your intended stay. It may be necessary to obtain a visa or an electronic travel authorization in advance of your travel. It is therefore vitally important that you check with your travel agent/consulate/embassy for exact visa requirements.

DO NOT book any flights until the Rockjumper Team have officially confirmed the tour.